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Disarmament Commission

337th meeting

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New York

Chair: Mr. Drobnjak ..... (Croatia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Opening of the session

The Chair: I declare open the 2014 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC).

Before we take up the first order of the day, allow me, on behalf of all the members of the Commission, to extend a warm welcome to Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, who is representing the Secretary-General here today. His presence underlines the importance of the UNDC in general and Member States' high expectations of this session in particular.

It now gives me great pleasure to give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General to make an opening statement.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I thank you, Mr. Chair, for giving me the opportunity to open this meeting. I am indeed grateful to have this opportunity to address the members of the Disarmament Commission on behalf of the Secretary-General. I wish at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your role as the new Chair of the Commission. You indeed have important challenges ahead of you.

To all members, in particular those who are attending a substantive session of the Disarmament Commission for the first time, I extend a warm welcome to one of the principal components of the United Nations disarmament work. Key recommendations, guidelines and principles related to disarmament have historically emanated from this Commission. Even the Cold War did not prevent progress on vital issues of common interest. Yet as we meet today, the General Assembly still remains

> "[m]oved by anxiety at the general lack of confidence plaguing the world and leading to the burden of increasing armaments and the fear of war" (resolution 502 (VI)).

Those words were not formulated today, or even recently, but 62 years ago. They are part of the first sentence of resolution 502 (VI), which established the original Commission in 1952. The agenda therefore remains in part the same.

It is true that the role of the Commission today bears little resemblance to its original treaty-making function. Yet the concerns over trust and confidence remain. They continue to prevent collective action in the common interest on an extremely important component of the United Nations agenda. We are justifiably shocked when we note and learn that global military spending in just one day is almost double the regular annual budget of the United Nations. We are frustrated and disappointed when we face difficulties achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which are so important to millions and millions of people around the world, because of a lack of resources. As we all should realize, the world is overarmed and peace is underfunded.

We see the symptoms of that lack of trust and confidence all around us. We see it in the lack of nuclear disarmament or plans to achieve such disarmament and

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in the relentless drive to develop ever more advanced weaponry. We see such mistrust in soaring military budgets and in the lack of transparency in the armaments trade. The challenge that we face is cyclical because the very lack of progress in such fields generates further mistrust and additional mutual suspicions.

As a deliberative subsidiary body of the General Assembly, the Commission is eminently placed and is mandated to start what is a difficult but vitally needed process of rebuilding trust and confidence among Member States. There is no reason why that process cannot begin today, in this very room. Can we not find a way to build on some positive developments that have occurred in the past year? I think of the successful conclusion of the Arms Trade Treaty and of the increasing number of countries that have signed up to it and ratified it. I think of the growing global consensus on the existential consequences of the possible use of nuclear weapons and of the outpouring of innovative initiatives that civil society continues to generate.

As we know from the work of the Commission at its previous two sessions, each of the substantive items on its agenda presents its own difficulties. Members, of course, know that very well. Yet, can anybody dispute that progress in one of those areas must go hand in hand with progress in the other? They are clearly mutually reinforcing approaches to international peace and security. Together, they form the very heart of the notion of general and complete disarmament — a goal found in a dozen multilateral treaties and long recognized as the ultimate objective of the United Nations.

The skills most needed today are present in this room in members themselves. They are the skills of diplomacy, guided by the pursuit of common ground and a shared recognition that cooperation is more advantageous than polarization or confrontation. It is a win-win proposition. It is still possible for 2014 to be a year for the diplomatic bridge-builders of this world to carry the day. The alternative of a new dark age, where the originators of fear, mutual suspicion and hatred prove triumphant, must not be an option. No one expects members of the Commission to resolve every disagreement. Their aim must be to find and expand new avenues and common ground. If they succeed and break the stalemate that has prevented the Commission from adopting guidelines or recommendations since 1999, further progress elsewhere in the disarmament machinery may well follow.

As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated to the Conference of Disarmament in January, do not wait for others to move; be the first mover. I ask members to keep those words in mind as they now start their work. I cannot think of better advice for the United Nations Disarmament Commission as it enters its sixty-second year. I wish the Commission progress and, indeed, success.

The Chair: I warmly thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his statement today.

I would now like to offer some thoughts on the work ahead from the Chair's perspective and some introductory remarks.

I have the privilege to address members in my capacity as Chair at the beginning of the 2014 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). At the outset, I would like to thank Member States for electing me Chair of the Commission and to reiterate my readiness to explore all ways, to consider all proposals and to engage in any dialogue required in order to bring the session to a successful conclusion. I sincerely thank the Deputy Secretary-General for addressing us today, thus underlining the importance of the meeting and the agenda before us. I would also like to express my appreciation to Ambassador Christopher Grima, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, for his dedicated and tireless work as Chair of the Commission during 2013. I thank him for all the support and valuable advice with which he has provided me. Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for all its efforts and assistance.

This year's substantive session marks the end of the triennial cycle and is a part of our collective effort to advance global disarmament and arms control norms, thereby ultimately strengthening international peace and security. The session that begins today also marks 15 years since the UNDC has produced any recommendations or confidence-building measures. The UNDC has been meeting year after year. Both agenda items, in the nuclear and conventional weapons fields, have been extensively debated but no concrete result has been achieved since 1999. Those two UNDC arenas of great potential have too long remained unused. In comparison, from 1979 to 1999 the UNDC was able to adopt by consensus 16 recommendations, guidelines and declarations. Therefore, what is at stake at this juncture is the very credibility of the Commission. The

Commission now runs the risk of its relevance being eroded. We have the chance to prove otherwise.

Judging solely by the Commission's record this century, one might conclude that disarmament is not nearly as high as it should be on the United Nations agenda, but we all know that is not the case. The recent deposit of instruments of ratification of the landmark Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) by 18 Member States, thus bringing us much closer to the ATT's entry into force, is a case in point proving the continuing relevance of disarmament in the work of the United Nations. Furthermore, after our session, two important meetings in the field of disarmament will take place here in New York: the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Fifth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Disarmament is high on the United Nations agenda, and there is a strong will among the Member States to continue building and enhancing global disarmament norms. The successful completion of a number of review conferences in recent years is testament to that.

At its sixty-eighth session, the General Assembly adopted over 50 resolutions dealing with disarmament, approximately a dozen of which are on nuclear disarmament issues. Five among those were adopted without a vote, signifying that, on some pivotal issues in this field, we all share the same views. In that context, let me highlight resolution 68/25, on the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty; resolution 68/26, on consolidation of the regime established by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco); and resolution 68/27, on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East.

We should try to clear the gridlock by rebuilding the trust in the common cause that was so elaborately described in the final document (A/S-10/2) of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted entirely to disarmament. We must continue to — and here let me borrow a phrase from the final document — seek security in disarmament.

Considering the importance of disarmament themes, essential proclamations need to be made repeatedly, no matter how obvious they might sound. It is important to emphasize that the risk of nuclear weapons proliferation continues to endanger international peace and security and that the prospect of them ending up in the hands of terrorists is a highly alarming concern. It is important to highlight the increasing need for progress in both conventional and nuclear disarmament; that disarmament and non-proliferation should go hand in hand; and that weapons of mass destruction pose a grave danger to us all, particularly in a world threatened by terrorists. Sometimes you have to emphasize the obvious if you want to move forward. Let us not forget that, for 15 years, the Commission has not stated even the most obvious things on the record.

Some might say that it is better to have no recommendations whatsoever than to produce documents of mediocre value with no new substance. There is certainly more than a grain of truth in that. But it is no longer just the paperwork that should be our concern — it should be the Commission itself and its relevance that are in obvious need of renewal. The Commission should, if not elevate, at least confirm its place within the United Nations disarmament machinery.

The Commission does not work in a vacuum and should be regarded against the background of the broader field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. On the other hand, it is useful to remind ourselves that the Commission is not a body that makes binding decisions, but rather a deliberative one. Its main strength stems from the fact that, as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, it is composed of all Member States. Therefore, its recommendations on nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, though not binding, carry global authority. Meaningful deliberations under the Commission's auspices should provide a policy-effective approach in disarmament matters.

Last week, I circulated preparatory documents for two Working Groups, prepared by their respective Chairs: Ambassador Naif bin Bandar Al-Sudairy of Saudi Arabia and Mr. Knut Langeland of Norway. Those documents will be the starting point for the scheduled debates in the two Working Groups. I have all confidence that both Working Group Chairs will do their utmost in exploring the ways forward, and I invite members to support them in their important work.

As members can see from the schedule of meetings, our work this year is organized in a somewhat slightly

different way than previous years. After two days of plenary meetings, on 9 April, Working Group I will commence its work in two consecutive sessions: in the morning and the afternoon. Working Group II will start on 10 April. This year, the Working Groups will not meet on the same day, but each Group will have an entire day for its deliberations. Such an organization of meetings should enable more focused work in both Groups and enhance the prospects for their fruitful outcome.

Finally, I encourage members to come up with new creative ideas and proposals that could revitalize work of the Commission and provide it with more results-oriented dynamics. As food for thought, I suggest that we might consider the possibility of exploring ways for using the vast expertise of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). It would perhaps be beneficial for future Commission work to establish the precise modalities for UNIDIR involvement and the use of its experts. That would be consistent with the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Disarmament Commission for 2006 (A/61/42).

My final message is that I hope that in the next three weeks, we will be able to adopt concrete suggestions in both fields and finally provide the Commission, as a fully universal deliberative body, with much-needed results. A successful outcome of our session would send positive signals on issues beyond the items on our agenda and could spur progress in the disarmament machinery as a whole. I believe that the Commission has a valuable role to play within the United Nations system and I will try, with members' very much appreciated support, expertise and assistance, to prove it. Let me conclude by inviting members to contribute constructively in the coming days to our collective effort to find solutions that are acceptable to all parties.

Adoption of the provisional agenda for the 2014 substantive session

The Chair: Members of the Commission may recall that, at its organizational session on 20 November 2013, the Commission took note of the provisional agenda for the 2014 substantive session (A/CN.10/L.72). Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the agenda as contained in that document.

The agenda was adopted.

Organization of work

The Chair: As members recall, the Commission is yet to elect two Vice-Chairs from the Group of African States and a Rapporteur from the Group of Western European and Other States.

The Group of African States has nominated Mr. Bouchaib El Oumni, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Permanent Mission of Morocco to the United Nations, and Mr. Isidor Marcel Sene, First Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Senegal to the United Nations, as Vice-Chairs of the Commission. I have also been informed that the Group of Western European and Other States has nominated Mr. Peter Winkler, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations, as Rapporteur.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Mr. Bouchaib El Oumni and Mr. Isidor Marcel Sene as Vice-Chairs and Mr. Peter Winkler as Rapporteur of the Commission.

It was so decided.

The Chair: On behalf of the Commission and the members of the Bureau, I would like to warmly congratulate the newly elected members of the Bureau and wish them success in discharging their duties. I am sure they will make an important contribution to the smooth functioning of the Commission. On a more personal note, I would like to say that I shall count on their support and counsel.

I would now like to draw members' attention to the schedule of meetings prepared by the Secretariat, which is contained in document A/CN.10/2014/CRP.1, As members will recall, the schedule was broadly agreed on at our informal meeting on 24 March. May I take it that the Commission takes note of the schedule of meetings contained in document A/CN.10/2014/CRP.1?

It was so decided.

The Chair: On a small point, regarding the rule for the rolling list of speakers, in order to maximize the time available to us during the general exchange of views, I propose that we maintain the practice of using a rolling list of speakers, which is currently open to all delegations wishing to take the floor. I would also like to remind all delegations already inscribed on the list to keep in mind that the rolling list implies that they should be prepared to speak at any time, possibly sooner than they had originally planned, because the list is changing as I speak.

General debate

The Chair: As we begin the general debate, at this stage we will continue with the list of speakers so far inscribed, and I again urge those delegations that have not yet done so to have themselves inscribed on the list as soon as possible. We plan to conclude the general debate tomorrow at 6 p.m., so we have, essentially, four plenary sessions for it. I would also like to remind delegations that we will as usual follow the established format for the length of statements, that is, 15 minutes for delegations speaking on behalf of groups and 10 minutes for delegations making statements in their national capacity.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the Chair of this year's substantive session. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the Working Groups on their elections, and would like to assure the Commission of the Movement's full cooperation.

NAM stresses the need for concrete results in the Disarmament Commission's 2014 session, since it is the last of the current cycle, and urges all Member States to show the political will and flexibility necessary to achieve that end. While highlighting the importance of the discussions held in the last two sessions, the Movement stands ready to cooperate actively and constructively with all parties in order to agree on concrete recommendations on the issues on the Commission's agenda. To that end, NAM has submitted a comprehensive working paper on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation that makes concrete recommendations with a view to their inclusion in the Commission's outcome document this year.

NAM underscores its long-standing position regarding the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and expresses its determination to promote multilateralism as the core principle of negotiation in that area. In that regard, the Movement reaffirms the Disarmament Commission's relevance and centrality — with its universal membership, and as the sole specialized and deliberative body within the multilateral disarmament machinery of the United Nations — for considering specific disarmament issues and submitting concrete recommendations to the General Assembly.

The Commission has contributed to the field of disarmament and arms control in the past, including by reaching a consensus on guidelines for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and conventional arms control. NAM regrets that the Commission has been unable to achieve success during previous cycles, due to a lack of political will and to the inflexible positions taken by certain nuclear-weapon States in particular, despite NAM's constructive role and concrete proposals throughout deliberations, especially in Working Group I.

We reiterate our deep concern about the slow pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament and the nuclear-weapon States' own lack of progress, and we urge them to totally eliminate their nuclear arsenals, weapons and delivery systems in accordance with their relevant multilateral legal obligations and the unequivocal undertaking that they made in 2000 and reiterated in 2010. NAM stresses that progress on nuclear disarmament and all aspects of nuclear non-proliferation is essential to strengthening international peace and security. In that context, we emphasize that nuclear disarmament, as the highest priority established by the tenth special session of the General Assembly and as a multilateral legal obligation, should not be made conditional on confidence-building measures or any disarmament efforts.

In that context, the Movement welcomes the convening on 26 September of the first High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament (see A/68/PV.11). The high-level participation and strong expression of support at the meeting for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons represented clear recognition of nuclear disarmament's critical importance to international peace and security. It also once again reaffirmed that nuclear disarmament continues to be a high priority for the international community.

NAM emphasizes that resolution 68/32, entitled "Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament", is an appropriate framework within which to pursue the noble objective of nuclear disarmament. The General Assembly's urgent call, through the resolution, for negotiations to start in the Conference on Disarmament in order to speedily conclude a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, prohibiting their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and providing for their destruction,

has the potential to bridge the current divide and enable us to make tangible progress on nuclear disarmament. At the same time, it depends on the exercise of strong political will, without which no recommendation can help us overcome the current stalemate.

In the context of that resolution, the Movement calls on Member States, the United Nations system, civil society, academia, parliamentarians, the mass media and individuals to commemorate 26 September as the international day for the total elimination of nuclear weapons through all means of educational and public awareness-raising activities with regard to the threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons and the necessity for their total elimination.

The United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament, to be convened no later than 2018, as decided by the same resolution, would indeed provide the international community with an opportunity to review the progress made on nuclear disarmament and to make concrete recommendations in order to maintain the momentum created by the High-level Meeting and to strengthen deepen international efforts towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. NAM welcomes the continued consideration of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, including at the second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, convened by Mexico on 13 and 14 February.

NAM emphasizes that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and that, pending such elimination, all non-nuclear-weapon States should be provided, as a matter of high priority, with universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding security assurances by all nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under all circumstances. The Movement underlines that improving existing nuclear weapons and developing new types of such weapons contradict the objective of achieving nuclear disarmament as a multilateral legal obligation and the commitments undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States in that regard. NAM reaffirms the importance of the application by nuclear-weapon States of the principles of transparency, irreversibility and international verifiability to all measures related to the fulfilment of their nuclear disarmament obligations and undertakings.

The Movement underlines the importance of the full realization of the inalienable right of developing countries to develop the research, production and use of nuclear energy, including the sovereign right to develop a full national nuclear fuel cycle for peaceful purposes without discrimination and to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

NAM again stresses that proliferation concerns are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements. Non-proliferation control arrangements should be transparent and open to participation by all States and should not impose restrictions on access to materials, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes required by developing countries. The Movement stresses that issues related to proliferation should be resolved through political and diplomatic means. Measures and initiatives taken in that regard should be within the framework of international law and should contribute to the promotion of international peace and security.

NAM States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) stress the importance of fulfilling the commitments made at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences of the Treaty and of implementing the action plans adopted by the 2010 NPT Review Conference on nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. NAM States parties to the NPT further underline that the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which is an integral and essential part of the package of decisions reached without a vote that enabled the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995, should be implemented without any further delay and reaffirms that the resolution remains valid until its objectives are achieved.

NAM States parties to the NPT express their profound disappointment at the fact that the conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, due to have been held in 2012, has not yet been convened despite the consensus decision of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The continuing delay in convening the conference runs contrary to the letter and spirit of the 1995 resolution. It also violates the collective agreement reached at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. They strongly reject the alleged impediments presented by the conveners for not convening the conference on schedule and urge

them to seek out credible assurances with regard to the unconditional participation of Israel and to convene the conference without any further delay so as to avoid any further possible negative repercussions on the effectiveness and credibility of the NPT, its 2015 review process and the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime as a whole.

In that regard, NAM recalls that, in the final document of the Tehran Summit of August 2012, the Heads of State and Government, while strongly supporting the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, called upon all parties concerned to take urgent and practical steps for the establishment of such a zone and, pending its establishment, demanded that Israel, the only country in the region that has not joined the NPT or declared its intention to do so, renounce its possession of nuclear weapons, accede to the NPT without precondition or further delay, promptly place all its nuclear facilities under the full-scope safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency and conduct its nuclear-related activities in conformity with the non-proliferation regime. They expressed great concern over the acquisition of a nuclear capability by Israel, which poses a serious and continuing threat to the security of neighbouring and other States, and condemned Israel for continuing to develop and stockpile nuclear arsenals. They also called for the total and complete prohibition of the transfer of all nuclear-related equipment, information, material and facilities, resources or devices and the extension of assistance in the nuclear-related scientific or technological fields to Israel.

NAM underscores the need for a strong and genuine political will in support of the multilateral disarmament machinery, in particular in the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, which remains the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body.

In conclusion, the Movement reiterates its full support for the UNDC's work, which should be intensified through reinvigorated political will in order to achieve meaningful outcomes so as to advance global disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Weisleder (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

At the outset, CELAC wishes to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2014 substantive session and extends its congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. We would also like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Christopher Grima of Malta for his tireless work as Chair of the Disarmament Commission last year.

CELAC reaffirms the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues, leading to the submission of concrete recommendations to the General Assembly. CELAC reiterates its willingness to work constructively to fulfil the tasks entrusted to the Commission.

The Community recalls the historic decision made by the Heads of State and Government of the States members of CELAC who, having gathered in Havana on the occasion of the second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States on 28 and 29 January, declared Latin America and the Caribbean to be a zone of peace and reaffirmed its permanent commitment to resolving disputes through peaceful means with the aim of uprooting forever the threat or use of force in our region.

Members of CELAC reaffirm the need to advance towards the primary objective of nuclear disarmament and to achieve and sustain a world free of nuclear weapons. In that context, we express our opposition to the improvement of existing nuclear weapons and the development of new types of nuclear weapons, which is inconsistent with the obligation of nuclear disarmament. We also reiterate the need to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in strategic doctrines and security policies.

We express our strong support to the conclusion of a universal legally binding instrument that leads to effective, irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament, in order to achieve the goal of complete elimination of all nuclear weapons under a multilaterally agreed timetable. CELAC Member States call for the earliest possible negotiation and adoption of a universal and legally binding instrument on negative security assurances.

While recalling the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, CELAC members reaffirm that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of

international law, including international humanitarian law, and of the Charter of the United Nations. Our Community reiterates that the only effective guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their complete elimination and prohibition.

Members of CELAC express our gravest concern at the enormous humanitarian impact and the global consequences of any accidental or intended use of nuclear weapons. We believe that the issue should be raised whenever nuclear weapons are discussed. We therefore commend Mexico for the successful conclusion of the second International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in the state of Nayarit in that country in February. We can upon all States to participate in the next International Conference to be held in Vienna in the second half of 2014.

At the time the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States was established, we confirmed the pride of our region by being the first densely populated area in the world declared as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, through the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which was signed in 1967 and entered into force in 1969. We wish to reiterate that the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones strengthens international peace and security, as well as the non-proliferation regime, and constitutes an important contribution to the achievement of nuclear disarmament.

We urge the nuclear-weapon States to withdraw all reservations to the Protocols of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and to respect the denuclearized character of Latin America and the Caribbean, thus helping to eliminate the possible use of nuclear weapons against the countries of the region. The Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) have been a political, legal and institutional reference point in the creation of other nuclear-weapon-free zones in different regions of the world. OPANAL's experience is also an important legacy of the international community for inspiring the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones.

CELAC regrets the failure to implement the agreement to hold the international conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction. CELAC strongly believes that, besides being an important contribution to the achievement of the goal of nuclear disarmament, the establishment of such zone would be a significant step in the peace process in the Middle East region. CELAC urges that the conference be held as soon as possible, as agreed by the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995, 2000 and 2010.

We reaffirm the commitment of our States to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to the full implementation of its three pillars: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We also reaffirm the inalienable right of States to develop research, production and the peaceful use of nuclear energy without discrimination and in conformity with articles I, II, III and IV of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Community also reaffirms the commitment of all parties to the Treaty to facilitate the participation in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

CELAC emphasizes the importance of achieving the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and therefore urges States that have not yet done so to accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear States. We also call on nuclear-weapon States to comply with their commitments under article VI of the Treaty and to advance towards the complete elimination of those weapons. We urge them to fully and immediately implement the 13 practical steps towards nuclear disarmament agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, as well as the action plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference.

The Community expresses its willingness to fully engage in the third session of the Preparatory Committee of the NPT Review Conference, to be held in New York from 28 April to 9 May, and chaired by Peru.

CELAC urges those States listed in annex 2 of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, whose ratification is indispensable for the entry into force of the Treaty, to accelerate their process of signing and/or ratifying that instrument, as a matter of priority, as a token of their political will and commitment to international peace and security.

Recalling the holding of the first High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, on 26 September 2013 (see A/68/PV.11), CELAC expresses its firm

commitment commitment to working towards holding a high-level international conference on identifying measures and actions for eliminating nuclear weapons as soon as possible, with a view to agreeing on a phased programme aimed at the complete elimination of nuclear weapons in a specific time frame, banning their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, and requiring their destruction.

CELAC believes firmly that practical confidence-building measures in the area of conventional weapons play an important role in promoting understanding, transparency and cooperation among States and enhancing stability and security, in strict compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with respect for their voluntary nature and for States' specific security concerns and situations. In that regard, it is worth recalling the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, which were adopted by consensus.

Our region has taken significant steps towards the implementation of confidence-building measures in the area of conventional arms, helping to enhance international peace and security. We therefore encourage Member States to strengthen, improve and broaden confidence-building measures at every level, as appropriate. In that regard, the Community welcomes all the transparency and confidence-building measures in the area of conventional arms that concerned States have already undertaken voluntarily undertaken in their respective regions or subregions, as well as the information on such measures volunteered to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures,

Our Community also reaffirms the crucial importance of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, recognizes its significant contribution to efforts in the area and stresses the need for its full and effective implementation. CELAC notes that the adoption in 2012 of the outcome document of the Second Review Conference of the Programme of Action establishes a clear goal and timeline for the international community to strengthen its efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons.

We reiterate the importance of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.We emphasize that work on the framework of the Programme of Action should continue, on a multilateral level and in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner, to ensure the adoption of legally binding instruments on marking, tracing and illicit brokering, in order to prevent small arms and light weapons from being diverted to the illicit market. We look forward to making progress on these issues during the Fifth Biennial Meeting of the Programme of Action, to be held in June, as well as during its 2014-2018 review cycle.

In reaffirming the importance of regional and international cooperation for preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, CELAC has agreed to establish a working group to study the crime and to submit a proposal for a mechanism and procedures that would enable us to coordinate our efforts effectively and with full respect for international law and the principles enshrined in the Charter, so as to strengthen actions aimed at preventing and combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition for the sake of public safety.

CELAC hopes that the Arms Trade Treaty, the first legally binding instrument on the arms trade, will be able to contribute to an effective response to the serious consequences that the illicit and non-regulated arms trade has for many people and States, particularly through the diversion of arms to non-State actors and unauthorized users who are often linked to transnational organized crime and drug trafficking. We also hope that the Treaty will be able to help prevent armed conflict and violence, and violations of human rights, including international human rights and humanitarian law instruments. At the same time, in anticipation of the Treaty's entry into force, we urge that it be implemented in a balanced, transparent and objective way and with respect for the sovereign right of all States to their legitimate self-defence, in conformity with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The subject of anti-personnel mines still requires the attention of the international community. CELAC welcomes the declaration of Central America as a mine-free zone. We recognize the value of the assistance of the United Nations Mine Action Service. Our group stresses the importance of cooperation for demining and assistance to victims and hopes that the recent successes will continue. We support international

efforts to reduce the suffering caused by cluster munitions and their use against civilian populations, in clear violation of international humanitarian law. We also recognize and commend the wish of any State to take immediate steps, agreed on multilaterally, to deal with the humanitarian problems caused by cluster munitions.

In conclusion, CELAC reaffirms the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the only multilateral negotiating body on disarmament and recognizes the renewal of the mandate of the informal working group, co-chaired by Ecuador, with the goal of producing a robust and progressive programme of work. We again deeply regret that the Conference has not been able to agree on and implement its programme of work. CELAC urges all Conference members to show the political will needed to ensure that it starts its substantive work without delay by adopting and implementing a balanced, comprehensive programme of work that advances the nuclear disarmament agenda, including through negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention, a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and a non-discriminatory treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices that serves both non-proliferation and disarmament purposes.

The Community would also like to take note of the important work undertaken by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and its assistance to the countries of the region in implementing disarmament measures in various areas.

The Community regrets that the Disarmament Commission has been unable to make recommendations in previous cycles. It is important for the Commission to fulfil its mandate, as expressed by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We call on Member States to show the necessary political will and flexibility to make progress on our recommendations. CELAC reaffirms its readiness to cooperate with the members of the Commission in achieving concrete results during this session. The Community calls on all delegations to show the necessary political will to enable this deliberative body of the United Nations to fulfil its mandate and make substantive recommendations to the General Assembly.

Mr. Sarki (Nigeria): The Group of African States would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to chair the 2014 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. As you work to facilitate a successful outcome in this final year of the three-year cycle, you can count on the support and constructive engagement of our Group. We hope our deliberations on the two items on the agenda will achieve concrete results under your leadership. The Group expresses its appreciation to your predecessor for his efforts during the 2013 substantive session and for his guidance and excellent leadership. The Group seizes this opportunity to also congratulate other members of the Bureau on their election. In addition, the African Group wishes to thank the Chairs of the two Working Groups for their efforts last year and for accepting to continue their facilitation at this session. The Group expresses appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General for his kind remarks.

The Group aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia and restates its commitment to the principle and validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. The African Group underscores that disarmament and proliferation issues are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements.

It is also important to highlight the role of the Commission as the sole specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. The Group believes that, notwithstanding some challenges, the Commission has positively contributed, in the past, to deliberations on nuclear disarmament as the highest global priority on disarmament and on issues related to nuclear non-proliferation, arms control, conventional weapons and other confidence-building measures in the field of multilateral diplomacy and disarmament.

The Group wishes, in that regard, to recall the consensus reached on guidelines for establishing nuclear-weapon-free-zones and for conventional arms control. We believe that the political will and flexibility demonstrated to attain these past agreements will be visible when deliberations are concluded on 25 April and a new agenda emerges for a new cycle in 2015.

In a short while, Member States will begin deliberations and considerations on recommendations

for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. We remain confident in the ability of this body to articulate all concerns in order to agree on concrete recommendations. In view of this, the Group calls for flexibility, in particular in the positions of nuclear-weapon States, and promises support for constructive actions and concrete proposals in the course of deliberations, especially during the discussions on nuclear disarmament.

The Group reiterates the entry into force of the Treaty of Pelindaba in 2009, which further restates that the continent of Africa is a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and we would like to assure members that our countries will continue to observe and honour that status. We again seize this opportunity to encourage States who have yet to ratify the Treaty, in particular the States contemplated in Protocol III, to take all necessary measures to ensure its speedy application. We believe that such action will significantly enhance the status of the Treaty and contribute to efforts to replicate this measure in the remaining parts of the world as one of the measures put in place to ensure a world free from the fear or possibility of the use of nuclear weapons.

On 26 September 2013, a High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear weapons (see A/68/PV.11) was convened here in New York. The overriding consideration behind convening such an important event was the need to seek a safer world for all and achieve security in a world without nuclear weapons. The Meeting was an opportunity to reiterate the highest priority attached to nuclear disarmament and to identify means of achieving progress towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

In that regard, the African Group also underlines the significance of resolution 68/32, entitled "Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament", as a fundamental framework in the onerous pursuit of the noble objective of nuclear disarmament. The General Assembly, in that resolution, is resolute concerning the need for an urgent commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for the early conclusion of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer and use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction.

In the context of the resolution, the African Group reiterates its call on Member States, the United Nations system, civil society, academia, parliamentarians, the mass media and individuals to honour the commemoration of 26 September as the international day for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We stand to benefit from educational and public awareness activities on the threat posed by nuclear weapons to humanity and the necessity of their total elimination. The African Group hopes that the international conference to be convened in 2018, as mandated by the resolution, will constitute an opportunity to review the good progress made on nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear weapons pose a present and existential threat to humankind, and their use would be a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of human civilization and an aggravated crime against humanity. The Group considers any doctrine justifying their use as unacceptable, including threats to non-nuclear-weapon States by nuclear-weapon States.

The Group calls on nuclear-weapon States to consider the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and to take measures aimed at the voluntary renunciation and dismantling of those weapons. In that context, the African Group welcomes the past two international Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, convened in Norway in 2013 and Mexico in 2014, and looks forward to the third conference, to be hosted by Austria in 2015.

The Group calls for a deepening of efforts to truly address the threat of nuclear weapons and achieve the end goal of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) through their abolition. In that respect, we reaffirm the necessity of applying the principles of transparency, irreversibility and verifiability by nuclear-weapon States in relation to nuclear disarmament measures. We believe that that is essential in order to promote the fulfilment of the obligations in article VI of the NPT and in consonance with the relevant multilateral legal obligations.

The African Group considers the total elimination of nuclear weapons as the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of such weapons and calls on all nuclear-weapon States to provide, as a matter of high priority, universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States on the use or threat of use of nuclear

weapons against them under all circumstances, pending the total elimination of such weapons.

The African Group reiterates the need for the full implementation of the action plans adopted at the 2010 NPT Review Conference on nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which is an integral and essential part of the package of decisions reached without a vote that enabled the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995.

The African Group strongly supports the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. The Group also reiterates its call to Israel, as the only country in the region that has not joined the NPT or declared its intention to do so, to renounce any possession of nuclear weapons and to accede to the NPT without precondition or delay.

We recall most vividly the consensus decision contained in the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference on convening, in 2012, a conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and express deep concern and disappointment over the failure to convene the conference in late 2012, as had been envisaged. In our view, that is contrary to the letter and spirit of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. As we prepare for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, we look forward to positive steps with regard to concrete actions being taken to convene that important conference on the Middle East without any further delay. The African Group urges the unconditional participation of all States in the Middle East, including Israel.

The African Group welcomes the initiative presented by Egypt before the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly on 28 September 2013, which contained concrete implementation steps in support of the establishment of the zone. In that context, the Group also notes with appreciation the letters sent by States members of the African Group from the Middle East region to the Secretary-General renewing their support for making the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

The Group reiterates its full support for the successful conclusion of the Second United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as a politically binding document that deals with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The Group looks forward to the Fifth Biennual Meeting of States on Small Arms, which convenes in June and promises its full support.

The Group also notes the general support among Member States for the need to establish a common international standard for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. An unregulated conventional arms transfer system continues to fuel the illicit trade and unauthorized use of such weapons by non-State actors. In that context, the African Group welcomes the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty resolution on 2 April 2013

> "to elaborate a legally binding instrument on the highest possible common international standards for the international transfer of conventional arms" (*resolution 67/234 A, third preambular paragraph*)

The resolution should be implemented in a balanced and objective manner that protects the interests of all States, not only the major international producing and exporting States.

The Group also reiterates that the full and balanced implementation of the Treaty is achievable in practice with the cooperation of all. The Group reaffirms the sovereign right of States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms and their parts and components for the self-defence and security needs of States, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The African Group wishes to highlight the efforts of the United Nations Regional Centres for peace and disarmament in terms of their contributions to disarmament issues. We wish to stress the need to further strengthen those regional centres for disarmament in order for them to fully discharge their mandates.

The Group anchors the success of this session on the strong political will of all, without which no recommendation can help us to overcome the current stalemate. We appeal for meaningful deliberations as we begin debates on the two major issues in the coming days towards achieving peace and security for all.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by adding my voice to that of preceding delegations in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament

Commission (UNDC) at its 2014 session. I would also like to assure you of the Swiss delegation's full support in the discharge of your mandate.

Switzerland hopes that the UNDC will make substantive progress in 2014. Over the past two years, both Working Groups have discussed a number of substantive proposals. It is our hope that at the end of this session, which will conclude the UNDC's three-year cycle, we will be able to report concrete progress to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. Tangible results within the Commission could have a positive impact on the 2014 session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

With regard to conventional arms, the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty will provide new opportunities. That Treaty is a major step for the United Nations system and its effective implementation must now be a priority for the international community.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, on the other hand, the growing gap between the progress needed in order to reach the goals that we have set ourselves and true progress is a major challenge. The international community is increasingly convinced that the potential use of such weapons could have devastating consequences, both immediately and in the long term. In addition, the tendency to underestimate the threats posed nuclear arsenals has given rise to important discussions. It is high time to unite around the humanitarian dimension, which is now well established in the discourse on nuclear weapons. It is important to use the positive dynamic of the humanitarian initiative and to continue our common work in order to step up accelerate concrete progress, in particular within the NPT, the Conference on Disarmament and other forums.

Furthermore, we continue to believe that the UNDC should consider ways to improve its working methods and to enhance its functioning. We believe that such modifications will serve as a useful base to revitalize the work of the UNDC as a whole. It is also essential to deepen the discussions on the composition of the agenda, that is to say, on the relationship between the work of Working Group I and Working Group II. For Switzerland, it is highly problematic to link the possible improvement of practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms to developments in the general guidelines on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Our delegation believes that such linkages reinforce dividing lines and are a recipe for inaction. In our view, it would be wiser to focus on areas where progress is possible by launching multiple parallel efforts.

Furthermore, the Commission would gain by focusing further on specific issues rather than on generic themes such as nuclear disarmament or conventional disarmament. Beyond that, the Commission could also further examine the possibility of opening up its proceedings to exchanges with representatives from civil society and academia. Finally, the Commission could also review the structure of its report to the General Assembly so that it better reflects the substance of those exchanges.

The Commission remains an important part of the United Nations disarmament machinery, as it holds deliberations on specific issues relating to nuclear weapons and conventional arms. The guidelines and recommendations adopted by the Commission are testimony to its added value and should inspire further progress. However, for almost 15 years now, this body has been able to adopt no substantial recommendations or guidelines. Nevertheless, the deliberative role of the Commission can offer one way of overcoming the prevailing lack of trust and confidence.

We must note, unfortunately, that the Commission is not an isolated case in the United Nations disarmament machinery. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has also been experiencing deadlock. However, the picture is not as bleak as one would think, insofar as an increasing number of delegations are participating in discussions about revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament. Conference delegations re-established an informal working group mandated to produce a programme of work that is concrete and progresses over time. This approach to overcoming the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament is based on one of several innovative suggestions aimed at improving the situation. While concrete progress has yet to materialize, we believe those steps, as small as they may be, can be seen as a significant development. Indeed, they are in line with resolution 66/66 on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Finally, it is crucial that we overcome our differences and work collectively to achieve the noble goals of the Commission. The 2014 session of the Commission can make a positive contribution to achieving that ambition,

and Switzerland stands ready to contribute to those efforts.

Mr. Fernandes (Brazil): I congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission and express the full support of my delegation.

Brazil aligns itself with the statement by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Brazil believes that an effective multilateral disarmament architecture is essential to fostering dialogue and building confidence among States, thereby making an important contribution to peace, security and stability. The Commission is an important pillar of that architecture, as it provides Member States with a platform of universal composition to debate and make recommendations on various issues in the field of disarmament.

Beyond just regretting the fact that the Commission has not issued recommendations in the past 14 years, we must try to find where the real difficulties lie. Brazil believes that the problems that prevent us from advancing further are eminently political rather than procedural. Blaming the United Nations disarmament architecture for the absence of concrete results would be inappropriate, as it only masks a lack of political will on the part of many to engage constructively on pressing issues. We should continue to pursue the goal of issuing concrete recommendations by consensus, while drawing inspiration from past achievements of the Commission, which provide us with solid reasons to believe in the utility of the Commission.

To name only a few important outcomes of past Commission sessions, I would underscore the principles agreed to in 1988 on verification, which is a fundamental element of any disarmament treaty; the 1996 guidelines for international arms transfers; and the 1999 guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The latter has been of important political value to the development of such initiatives, including in regard to the desirable and expected establishment of such a zone in the Middle East. Those outcomes, which were certainly regarded as breakthroughs in their own time, show us that, with the necessary political commitment, we can fulfil the Commission's mandate. Agreeing on outcomes by consensus is certainly a challenge. The complexity of the task, however, must be an incentive for redoubling efforts rather than a justification for the status quo.

We must recognize that progress in nuclear disarmament has been clearly insufficient. Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the fundamental bargain of the Treaty have yet to be implemented. Brazil firmly believes that nuclear weapons must be completely eliminated and prohibited in a transparent, irreversible and verifiable manner, according to clearly defined benchmarks and timelines. That goal must be achieved through multilateral concerted efforts. The Commission could contribute to the beginning of the discussions on the principles and elements of a nuclear weapons convention, taking into account, inter alia, the 1988 guidelines on verification.

Brazil has expressed, on several occasions, the reasons for our conviction that the promotion of nuclear disarmament must be a top priority on the international community's agenda. In that regard, there are three main perspectives of a humanitarian, socioeconomic and security-related nature to be borne in mind.

Due to their catastrophic humanitarian implications, nuclear weapons must be eliminated as an urgent ethical imperative. We welcome the renewed debate on that issue, which was further strengthened at the conference held in Nayarit, Mexico, last February.

From a socioeconomic perspective, we regret that, 20 years after the end of the cold war, and even in the face of the current global financial constraints, large sums are still being spent in order to maintain and modernize nuclear arsenals. Resources that could help end poverty and finance development are still being diverted to sustain nuclear war machinery. When talking about peace and security issues in the post-2015 agenda, nuclear disarmament should figure prominently in our discussion.

With regard to the security perspective, as long as nuclear arsenals continue to exist, the world will never be entirely free from the risk of devastating nuclear destruction, be it intentional or accidental, and the longer a limited group of countries considers itself entitled to possess nuclear weapons, the greater the risk that other States and non-State actors will try to acquire or develop such weapons. We have agreed that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing, but have yet to give operational value to that truism.

As a party to the first denuclearized zone established in a densely populated area, through the Treaty of Tlatelolco, Brazil is convinced of the numerous benefits of these zones, not only for the stability of the region concerned, but also for the achievement of the broader goal of a world free from nuclear weapons. Brazil underscores that the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean can provide inspiration for the establishment of other nuclear-weapons-free zones. We stand ready to share our experience, bearing in mind the different realities and circumstances of other regions.

At the bilateral level, Brazil has proudly developed, together with Argentina, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Material, which is a successful model of cooperation and confidence-building between neighbours. Nevertheless, the fact that only 39 per cent of the world's population live in nuclear-weapons-free zones reminds us that there is no room for complacency. Brazil joins others in voicing our disappointment about the postponement of a conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, which should have taken place by 2012, as provided for by the 2010 NPT action plan. We support renewed efforts in that regard, and hope that concrete progress will be achieved before the next NPT Review Conference, which will be held next year.

One of the core functions of the United Nations disarmament machinery is to enhance confidence and build trust among Member States. Brazil supports multilateral confidence-building efforts in the field of conventional arms. We participate on a regular basis in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures.

We have also been submitting national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which contributes to enhancing transparency. We support the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and of the International Tracing Instrument, and we are looking forward to the discussions during the Fifth Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms to be held in June.

Confidence-building measures at the regional level are also of relevance. Brazil and our neighbours in South America are strengthening confidence and enhancing transparency in defence policies, including information on military expenditures and conventional arms. The multilateral legal framework in the field of conventional arms has been strengthened with the conclusion and opening for signature of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We hope that, upon its entry into force, the ATT will help address the serious consequences of non-regulated trade and illicit trafficking in arms, including small arms and light weapons.

Brazil is ready, whenever it is considered appropriate, to engage in a constructive debate on possible agenda items to be examined in the next cycle of the Disarmament Commission. In our view, the work of that forum could benefit from a more specific thematic agenda. While we agree that the methods of work of the Commission could be improved, we favour a more comprehensive approach to the issue, which should be done through the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Finally, as this is the third session of a triennial cycle, we sincerely expect that the Disarmament Commission will be able to agree on substantive recommendations on the issues in our agenda. More broadly, it is our hope that the debates held in this forum will create a positive momentum towards the United Nations disarmament structures as a whole, including the upcoming session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to take place later this month.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the 2014 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, as well as the members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the Working Groups. I also thank Ambassador Christopher Grima, the outgoing Chair, for his guidance in providing the firm basis for the 2014 Disarmament Commission deliberations.

My delegation also expresses its sincerest appreciation to Ms. Angela Kane, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and her Office, for the support provided for our deliberations. This year is the final year of a three-year cycle and we hope that we can demonstrate significant progress in comparison to past years. It is therefore crucial that we are committed collectively to making the Commission an effective entity of the disarmament machinery. Firm and decisive

outcomes are therefore needed to emerge from our two Working Groups so as to provide new directives for addressing the threats and challenges that confront us today.

While we focus on two substantive issues, it is equally important to improve the working methods and revitalize the Commission to implement past recommendations and serve as a platform for considering new ideas for the future. Trust and confidence-building on issues mandated for the two Groups are the fundamental principles for achieving our work.

In light of the several regional tensions witnessed today, focus on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation should gain utmost priority in the Disarmament Commission. Universalizing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) are prerequisites, especially in the framework of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference later this month. The recommendations of the recently held Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague place an important emphasis on collective measures for ensuring non-proliferation, and ultimately disarmament.

This year also marks also the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). On this occasion, Kazakhstan hosted a workshop last month in Astana for Central Asia and other countries — 34 in all — and regional and international organizations to discuss how the resolution can be effectively implemented by the international community.

To guarantee the physical security of nuclear materials and equipment to prevent nuclear proliferation and terrorism, it is important to establish strong nuclear-weapon-free zones. We are pleased to inform the Commission that discussions are under way to finally sign the so-called negative security assurances for the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. To ensure regional security, my country will shortly host a nuclear fuel bank or low-enriched uranium bank of the International Atomic Energy Agency, convert high-enriched uranium reactors to low-enriched uranium fuel, establish a regional nuclear security training centre and strengthen its emergency preparedness, response and mitigation capabilities.

We also call for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and Kazakhstan is ready to assist the coordinator of the negotiation process. To make the entire world such a zone, PresidentNursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan has proposed a universal declaration on the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world, as the first step towards such a convention aimed at nuclear abolition.

My country joins the call for breaking the stalemate and reviving the Conference on Disarmament in order to demonstrate success at the 2015 NPT Review Conference. The world can ill afford to wait further for the drafting of the fissile material cut-off treaty, a convention against nuclear weapons and other key instruments. The five-point plan of the Secretary-General should also be an integral aspect of those overall multidimensional efforts.

Seeing the need to step up the goals of Working Group I, Kazakhstan has decided to make nuclear security and non-proliferation some of the key issues it will champion if elected to serve as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2017-2018.

Regarding Working Group II, Kazakhstan will work with redoubled vigour to ensure the robust implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The response of Member States in bringing the Arms Trade Treaty into force is encouraging. Kazakhstan is undergoing an internal national process towards becoming a signatory of the Treaty. In the meantime, we will continue to join the global effort in tightening regulatory and scrutiny procedures aimed at optimal accountability through enhanced confidence-building measures.

Finally, my country stands ready, with resolute political will, to support the international community in accelerating new momentum for the Disarmament Commission. Disarmament and non-proliferation therefore are among the key pillars today in establishing peace and stability based on the principles of international law, human rights and sustainable development.

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the Chair of the Disarmament Commission at its 2014 session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of African States, and I would like to make the following additional comments:

Algeria considers general and complete disarmament to be crucially important to ensuring international peace and security, and reiterates its commitment to multilateral diplomacy as the core negotiating principle for the disarmament agenda. We reaffirm the central role of the United Nations as a universal multilateral framework for considering disarmament issues, as well as the relevance and centrality of the Disarmament Commission as the sole specialized and deliberative body within the multilateral disarmament machinery of the United Nations.

My delegation looks forward to achieving a meaningful result that advances global disarmament and non-proliferation through the current session of the Commission. In that regard, we would like to stress the particular importance of this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, coming as it does at the end of the current three-year cycle. The Commission is expected to adopt concrete recommendations on its two agenda items, "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons" and "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms". As a State party to the main treaties concerning nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, Algeria reaffirms that nuclear disarmament remains its highest priority and reiterates its concern about the existence of nuclear weapons and their potential use or threat of use. We therefore believe strongly in the need for substantive progress in multilateral nuclear disarmament.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to once more stress the importance of universalizing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the cornerstone of the nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and of ensuring balanced and comprehensive compliance with each of its three pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and the promotion of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Numerous States have chosen to use atomic energy for exclusively civilian applications, in accordance with article IV of the NPT. Indeed, nuclear energy represents for many developing countries a strategic choice for their economic development and energy security needs. Accordingly, my delegation would like to express its support for the legitimate right to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under the non-proliferation regime.

In the certainty that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use, Algeria supports the road map proposed by NAM during the High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11). In that context, Algeria welcomes the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 68/32, "Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament", and calls for effective implementation of its provisions, and in particular for the start of negotiations to speedily conclude a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons prohibiting their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, and providing for their destruction.

In accordance with the NPT, Algeria reaffirms that nuclear-weapon States in particular should fully comply with their special obligations, and stresses how important it is that they apply the principles of transparency, irreversibility and international verifiability in all measures related to the fulfilment of their nuclear disarmament obligations and undertakings. In that regard, Algeria calls on all States parties to the NPT to implement the action plan adopted by consensus at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We also wish to stress the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in order to enable it to enter into force, thus contributing to the process of nuclear disarmament.

Since establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones is an important step towards achieving the goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the entry into force on 15 July 2009 of the Pelindaba Treaty, which established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, represents an important contribution in that regard. Its example, and that of other existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, should be followed in the Middle East. In that context, Algeria would like to register its severe disappointment at the fact that a conference on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, due to be held in 2012, has not yet been convened. We call on the Secretary-General and the three sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East to redouble their efforts to convene a conference without any further delay. and stress how important it is that all States in the Middle East participate, in accordance with the consensus decision of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Regarding the issue of conventional weapons, Algeria supported the resolution by which the General

Assembly adopted the Arms Trade Treaty. We believe that its adoption will undoubtedly strengthen the multilateral architecture in the field of disarmament. The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to threaten peace and stability in many countries and regions, particularly the Sahel, as a source supplying terrorist and organized crime groups. My delegation, which is deeply concerned about this illicit trade, reiterates the importance of full, balanced and effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and of the International Tracing Instrument. Clearly, international cooperation and assistance is essential in this area.

Concerning the issue of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, Algeria wishes to underline that in efforts aimed at contributing to international peace and security, such measures should be undertaken in full conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including the right to self-determination of all peoples, taking into account the particular situations of those under colonial or other forms of alien domination or foreign occupation, and recognizing the right of peoples to take legitimate action, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, in order to realize their inalienable right to self-determination.

I would like to conclude by expressing the hope that all Member States will show the political will necessary to enable the Disarmament Commission to reach a successful conclusion to its three-year cycle.

Mr. Dehgani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to begin by congratulating you on your election, Sir. My delegation has full confidence in your able leadership and ability to steer the work of the Commission successfully. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation throughout this important session, the last of the Disarment Commission's current three-year cycle. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election and to thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his statement.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We meet this year in the wake of the momentum created by the General Assembly's first-ever High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, held in September (see A/68/PV.11). The strong support for nuclear disarmament expressed at that meeting by political and geographical groups, national leaders and civil society, indicated how powerful and deep-seated the demand is for nuclear disarmament. It has shown once again that total elimination of nuclear weapons still remains a top priority for the international community. The follow-up to that meeting, the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 68/32, containing the three-point proposals made by the Non-Aligned Movement, represents an appropriate road map for reinvigorating and channeling all international efforts relating to nuclear disarmament.

We should take advantage of that momentum in realizing nuclear disarmament, which is a long overdue obligation and an essential element in maintaining and enhancing international peace and security. That fact reminds us of the important responsibility of the Commission and, naturally, the difficult task ahead of us in formulating a comprehensive and action-oriented document that lives up to high expectations, a document that, in terms of its content, can be considered to be above the resolutions of the First Committee and below a treaty, just as the Commission itself stands somewhere between the First Committee that produces resolutions and the Conference on Disarmament that produces legally binding instruments.

The Commission has a special responsibility in taking forward nuclear disarmament, first, because it is the sole specialized deliberative body of the General Assembly on all disarmament issues, among which nuclear disarmament has the highest priority, and, secondly, because the Commission has unfortunately never adopted a concrete set of guidelines on nuclear disarmament, as a result of the inflexible positions of certain countries.

The task ahead of us is also particularly challenging because of the issues related to political will. Although for over nearly seven decades the overwhelming majority of States have been strongly and consistently calling for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, some nuclear-weapon States continue their inflexible position in that regard. That has been the only challenge blocking efforts aimed at nuclear disarmament, including within the Disarmament Commission. Indeed, success will not be achieved without overcoming that challenge. In that context, we reiterate our strong call to those nuclear-weapon States to shoulder their responsibilities.

Nuclear-weapon States should comply with their legal obligations under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and their unequivocal undertakings at the Treaty Review Conferences to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear weapons. Limited bilateral or unilateral reductions in and the mere decommissioning of nuclear weapons fall far short of the real and effective steps necessary for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Nor can they be a substitute for it, as the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons in an irreversible, transparent and internationally verifiable manner is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of such weapons.

It goes without saying that there is another important issue that needs to be addressed in the Disarmament Commission, namely, the importance of the full realization of the inalienable right of developing countries to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy, including the inherent right to develop full national nuclear fuel cycles for peaceful purposes without discrimination and to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Taking the opportunity afforded by today's meeting, I would also like to point out the special responsibility of the three nuclear-weapon States that co-sponsored the 1995 resolution on the Middle East in implementing that resolution and the related part of the 2010 action plan, in particular the convening of a conference that unfortunately did not take place only because of Israel's refusal to participate in it. As the country that proposed the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in 1974, the Islamic Republic of Iran will seriously continue its efforts for the establishment of the zone. The only obstacles to that end are Israel's nuclear weapons and its persistent refusal to join the NPT. Therefore, Israel must be compelled to participate in the Conference, renounce its possession of nuclear weapons, accede to the NPT without any precondition or further delay and as a non-nuclear-weapon party and place all its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that if all representatives show flexibility and cooperate constructively, we would be able to overcome the aforementioned challenges. Therefore, let us decide together to safeguard our national and human interests, that is, to have a nuclear-weapon-free world, and demonstrate how able we are to make use of new opportunities to remove old obstacles. In its turn, my delegation stands ready to fully cooperate with the Chair and all Member States in having a successful substantive session this year.

Mr. Diallo (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Senegal associates itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of African States and the Non-Aligned Movement by the representatives of Nigeria and Indonesia, respectively. I offer my warm congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

Allow me also to warmly thank the outgoing Chair, Ambassador Christopher Grima, Permanent Representative of Malta, for all the praiseworthy efforts that he undertook during the previous session to make progress in the work of the Disarmament Commission.

Following three cycles of deadlock in which no recommendation was made, the Commission is launching this year the final stage of the three-year cycle 2012-2014 in a global context where the international community continues to encounter a great many security-related challenges. Stepping up our efforts, combined with strong political will, can lead us to come up with an effective joint response to those challenges. While underscoring the importance of the exchanges that took place last year, my country expresses the hope that the Commission will be in a position this year to adopt concrete recommendations on the issues on our agenda.

With respect to conventional weapons, whose proliferation was an important destabilizing factor in the Sahel region — my friend, the Ambassador of Algeria, just mentioned that point — we welcome the adoption in 2013 of the Arms Trade Treaty. Now, all that remains to be done is to work for its entry into force as rapidly as possible and see to its effective implementation. We would like to congratulate the countries that have already done so, and I would like to inform you, Sir, that Senegal has already launched the process of ratifying the aforementioned instrument.

Furthermore, my country backed a number of other initiatives in the field of disarmament and has committed itself to comply with norms established in the field. Accordingly, we subscribed to the Declaration of the Wellington Conference, which led to the Oslo

Convention on Cluster Munitions in December 2008. When it comes to small arms and light weapons, we call for a strengthening of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and, in parallel, the International Tracing Instrument.

With respect to nuclear disarmament, the hope that arose as a result of the success of the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which was held in May 2010, and from the conclusion of the New START treaty, has, however, unfortunately died down, given the growth in the budget devoted by States to pursuing their nuclear programmes. Based on that fact, my country is in favour of the total elimination of nuclear activities for military purposes, which threaten global peace and exacerbate tensions at the national and international levels. To that end, my delegation believes that the following issues must receive the Commission's full attention during this session.

First, we must reaffirm our strong political will in order to curb nuclear proliferation.

Secondly, we must work for the universalization of the NPT and the implementation of its relevant provisions.

Thirdly, we must act with resolve towards the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the implementation of obligations under the NPT and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. Furthermore, it would be useful to take into account the need to negotiate and adopt a legally binding instrument prohibiting the production of fissile material, as well as to ensure a follow-up to the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11), which was held on 26 September 2013.

Fourthly, nuclear-weapon States must reach an agreement on an irreversible, transparent and more ambitious programme to reduce their arsenals and, at the same time, provide security guarantees through a legally binding instrument to non-nuclear-weapon States.

Fifthly, the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones should be strengthened and new zones should be established, as stipulated in the conclusions of the most recent NPT Review Conference with regard to the convening in 2012 of a conference on the establishment of a nuclear-free-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We regret that the conference has not taken place.

Sixthly and finally, the right of countries to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to the effective and safe transfer of appropriate technology to States that fulfil their obligations under the NPT must be reaffirmed. Of course, the International Energy Agency Atomic will be responsible for overseeing all relevant modalities.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the 2014 substantive session and extend my congratulations to the other members of Bureau.

Ukraine reaffirms the importance of the Disarmament Commission and reiterates its willingness to work constructively in order to fulfil its tasks.

This year Ukraine celebrates one of the most important events in its modern history, the twentieth anniversary of Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and subsequently the signing of the Budapest Memorandum on security assurances to Ukraine. I would like to recall once again the fact that more than 23 years ago, immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine owned one of the largest nuclear arsenals in the world. There could have been great temptation for our nation to keep it, but we chose a different path. We renounced our nuclear arsenal. And we know that we have done the right thing.

Given the global dimension of those steps and taking into account the cruciality of the enduring problems in the sphere of nuclear disarmament, in particular in light of the explosive situation on the Korean peninsula, as well as the Russian military aggression in Crimea and the further escalation of the situation on the northern borders of our country, we deem it indispensable to redraw the attention of all Member States to the unique example Ukraine has been showing in the framework of the United Nations by remaining committed to the provisions of the NPT, despite the fact that Russian Federation has failed to fulfil its obligations under the Budapest Memorandum. Hereby we confirm that Ukraine considers the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons a cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and an essential basis for achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

In that context, we commend the efforts of States that have reaffirmed their guarantees for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and appraise their support and engagement for those commitments to be further fulfilled. We still count on those States because Ukraine never agreed to recognize the deliberate annexation of a part of its territory by the Russian Federation. In that regard, we invite everyone to participate in the round table on issues of nuclear disarmament and security guarantees for the States that voluntarily renounced their nuclear potential, to be held on 28 April at United Nations Headquarters in New York during the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Now, with regard to confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, to start with I would like to note that this is an issue whose relevancy has been confirmed by Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine. Ukraine remains consistently committed to the objectives of strengthening security for all, including through effective and verifiable arms control. As such, Ukraine welcomes all respective measures in the field of conventional arms past, present and future.

My country is a long-term responsible participant of such pan-European, subregional and complimentary bilateral confidence-building mechanisms relevant to arms control, such as the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Treaty on Open Skies, the Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, as well as separate bilateral agreements on confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) with neighbouring Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Belarus. On 10 March, we signed an agreement on bilateral CSBMs with Romania. Regrettably our numerous proposals to enter into similar agreements with Russia were rejected by the Russian side under the pretext of a strategic partnership between our countries, and today we understand the true nature of and real reasons for that partnership.

Sharing dissatisfaction with the ongoing impasse in conventional arms control in Europe, which has arisen through the fault of Russian leadership, as well as with the slowdown in the improvement of the Vienna Document's CSBMs, my country, as is known, initiated during its chairmanship in 2013 of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) a discussion on the role that conventional arms control and CSBMs can play in a modern and future security architecture. The main goal of Ukraine's initiative was and is to create a future-oriented strategic discussion on conventional arms control and CSBMs without prejudging its outcome. While the discussions have not yet provided a firm indication as to the concrete next steps, Ukraine's initiative proved to be a timely undertaking and has already found support, including from the current Swiss OSCE Chair.

Mr. Aho (United States of America): The United States congratulates you, Ambassador Drobnjak, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission during its 2014 session. We offer our full support as you, Sir, guide the work of this session forward. We also thank Ambassador Christopher Grima of Malta, as others have, for his able stewardship as the Commission's Chair in 2013. Allow me to thank as well Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson for his thoughtful remarks, of which we have taken good note.

Before making a few observations about this year's session of the Disarmament Commission, the United States would like to outline its approach to the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to be held from 28 April to 9 May. The United States regards the 2014 Preparatory Committee as a further opportunity to strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to reinforce our shared responsibilities to uphold it.

Heading into the third Preparatory Committee before the 2015 Review Conference, NPT Parties should work to preserve and build on the positive momentum of the successful Review Conference in 2010 and the 2012 and 2013 Preparatory Committees. Parties should emphasize the mutually reinforcing nature of the NPT's three pillars, and the fact that all parties benefit from the NPT and can contribute to strengthening it. We seek to foster a sense of common purpose by focusing on accomplishments and shared responsibilities. The United States will continue to fulfill its NPT obligations, and remains committed to full implementation of the 2010 Review Conference action plan. We encourage a balanced review of NPT implementation that addresses each of the three pillars and builds on the consensus achieved in 2010.

Turning to the topics on the Commission's agenda, the policy of the United States is to achieve the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. In

this, the fifth year since President Obama's Prague address on nuclear disarmament, we are working to create the conditions for the eventual achievement of that goal. We are sensitive to concerns about the pace of progress on disarmament, but, as the President has said, the path to zero will require patience and persistence. It can only be reached through concrete and progressive steps. Disarmament will not be achieved in a single negotiation or by setting artificial deadlines, as some propose, with a nuclear weapons convention.

We are also sensitive to the efforts to raise awareness of the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. In that regard, we cannot stress strongly enough that it is precisely because we well understand the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons that we have devoted time, hard work, and considerable resources in a decades-long endeavour to reduce and ultimately eliminate nuclear weapons.

For subsequent steps toward nuclear disarmament, the United States remains committed to pursuing the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and an international agreement to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). The United States is actively participating in the General Assembly's FMCT group of governmental experts, which began work on 31 March with a view to providing impetus for FMCT negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

We welcome China's hosting of the fifth conference of the permanent five in Beijing on April 14 and 15. This process is promoting regular dialogue among the five and can lay the foundation for eventual multilateral nuclear negotiations. We will continue to keep the international community apprised of this work.

Regarding nuclear non-proliferation, we encourage parties to the NPT to highlight the security benefit that comes from the commitment of non-nuclear-weapon States, as per the Treaty, not to acquire nuclear weapons and to accept safeguards on all peaceful nuclear activities. By promoting regional and global security and stability, effective non-proliferation helps create the international conditions necessary to achieving the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament. Non-proliferation also provides a framework that promotes the broadest possible cooperation on peaceful uses of nuclear energy in order to benefit all humankind. Non-compliance should be challenged and States should be held accountable for their violations.

Serious cases of non-compliance threaten the integrity of the NPT and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. All States should insist that Iran, North Korea and Syria return to compliance with their international obligations. The efforts of the 5+1 group on Iran offer an important opportunity to peacefully resolve one of the greatest challenges to the NPT regime. This has our fullest attention. NPT parties should encourage the full implementation of the Treaty's safeguard provisions. A key priority is gaining universal support for the Additional Protocol so that the IAEA has the essential tools for identifying possible non-compliance. With more than 120 adherents, the Protocol is an established norm. NPT parties should also endorse the Protocol as an international standard for verification.

We also draw attention to the important work being done to prevent terrorist organizations from acquiring nuclear materials. We are making great strides in addressing this threat through the nuclear security summit process launched by President Obama in 2010. Over the course of three summits, we have established a global network of experts who work on nuclear security at senior levels in 53 Governments and multiple international organizations. The trends we are seeing are very positive. The number of countries and facilities with highly enriched uranium and plutonium is decreasing, security at storage sites is increasing, more countries are prepared to counter nuclear smuggling, more countries are seeking international advice and the global nuclear security architecture is stronger. We thank the Netherlands for hosting the most recent Nuclear Security Summit on 24 and 25 March in The Hague.

In addition to arms control, confidence-building measures are effective elements in a limited toolkit for reducing tensions and preventing further escalation in a time of crisis. The crisis in Ukraine has demonstrated the continuing value of implementing transparency and confidence-building regimes such as the Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Uilding Measures and the Open Skies Treaty.

I would now like to touch briefly on several other important issues. Although Russia's actions in Ukraine have significantly undermined mutual trust, no one should forget that even in the darkest days of the Cold War, the United States and Russia found it in our mutual interest to work together on reducing the nuclear threat. At the appropriate time, we will seek discussions

on additional negotiated reductions with Russia to address all categories of nuclear weapons, strategic and non-strategi, when conditions are conducive to further steps.

On the matter of the Middle East, the United States stands by its commitment to working with the other conveners, the facilitator and States in the region to hold a conference to discuss a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. We continue with efforts to arrange for a conference in which all States in the region participate and take a first step towards discussing this long-sought goal.

The United States is committed to the stable, sustainable and peaceful use and protection of outer space to support the vital interests of all nations. In that regard, along with Russia and China, we were pleased to sponsor resolution 68/50, which refers the recommendations contained in the report of the consensus Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (A/68/189) to the Disarmament Commission for consideration. The Group's recommendations on space transparency and confidence-building measures are an ideal topic for in-depth consideration at a future substantive session of the Commission. Specifically, the United States believes that the Commission should establish a working group on space transparency and confidence-building measures as part of its agenda for the 2015-2017 cycle.

Finally, this year the Commission is set to conclude its three-year consideration of nuclear disarmament and nuclear proliferation in Working Group I, and confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons in Working Group II. The Chairs of the Working Groups, from Saudi Arabia and Norway respectively, have left no stone unturned in their pursuit of compromise on these important issues, and we thank them for their sincere efforts.

Over the past two annual sessions, it is safe to say that the Commission has achieved at least part of its mandate — that is, to deliberate. We have pondered and sifted through a vast amount of information on often contentious matters. But if the Commission is to have any chance of fully meeting its responsibilities by producing consensus recommendations for the General Assembly, the time has come to act, to decide, this year. As my delegation has often said, even a modest consensus outcome on the nuclear and conventional topics before us would be better than no outcome at all. In the view of the United States, this is the realistic goal that the Commission should be striving for in these next few short weeks. The United States will do all it can to breathe a measure of life back into this body. We pledge to exercise political will to reach our goal, ever mindful that political will can yield results only when it is practised in good faith and approached as a reciprocal, two-way street.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.